

Tribal  
Kings Orchard  
1 Queens Street  
Bristol, BS2 0HQ

T 0300 123 1231  
Text Phone: 0161 6188524  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)

**Direct T** 0117 3115307  
**Direct email:** rachel.evans@tribalgroup.com

30 March 2015

Mrs Elizabeth Williams  
Executive headteacher  
St Edward's Catholic Primary School  
New Road  
Sheerness  
Kent  
ME12 1BW

Dear Mrs Williams

**Special measures monitoring inspection of St Edward's Catholic Primary School**

Following my visit with Bill James, Additional Inspector, to your school on 26 and 27 March 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's previous monitoring inspection.

The inspection was the fifth monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in March 2013. The full list of the areas for improvement which were identified during that inspection is set out in the annex to this letter. The monitoring inspection report is attached.

Having considered all the evidence I am of the opinion that at this time:

The school is not making enough progress towards the removal of special measures. The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next inspection.

This letter and monitoring inspection report will be published on the Ofsted website. I am copying this letter and the monitoring inspection report to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Governing Body, the Corporate Director of Education, Learning and Skills for Kent, and the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark.

Yours sincerely

Jackie Krafft  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**

## **Annex**

### **The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in March 2013**

- Rapidly improve the quality of teaching and pupils' achievement by making sure that:
  - teachers expect pupils to take a more active role in their learning and complete more work
  - teachers make sure that all pupils understand how to improve their work and have time to respond to the comments teachers write in marking
  - teachers give pupils work that builds on what they can already do, especially for more-able pupils
  - teachers learn from the outstanding practice that exists within the federation and local network of schools.
- Improve learning in the Reception class by making sure that:
  - children have more opportunities to be independent and learn by choosing their own activities
  - activities set out for children to choose from are carefully planned to target specific learning needs.
- Improve the quality of leadership by making sure that:
  - where teaching is less than good, teachers are given effective guidance and short-term targets to aim for that improve their performance rapidly
  - subject leaders and other leaders keep a close check on teaching and learning in their areas of responsibility
  - the school improvement plan gives details about what should be achieved at interim stages, and these are checked to see whether everything is improving quickly enough
  - leaders evaluate how well the spending on additional help for pupils is working
  - senior leaders look for patterns in pupils' behaviour to ensure that they identify how it can be improved over time.
- Improve the governance of the school by:
  - developing the skills of the governing body, especially their understanding of information from tests and assessments in relation to other schools nationally
  - ensuring that governors have all the information required to help them challenge the school's leaders more effectively.

An external review of governance should be undertaken in order to assess how this aspect of leadership and management may be improved.

## **Report on the fifth monitoring inspection on 26 and 27 March 2015**

### **Evidence**

Inspectors observed the school's work, scrutinised documents and met with senior leaders, the subject leaders for English and mathematics, a group of pupils in Years 5 and 6, two governors, two representatives from the local authority and a representative of the diocese. Teaching and learning were observed in every class. Half of the observations were conducted jointly, either with the executive headteacher or the head of school. Samples of pupils' books were looked at. The school's checks on safeguarding pupils and attendance were viewed. Behaviour and safety did not form part of this monitoring inspection because they were judged to be better than other aspects of the school's work at the last section 5 inspection.

### **Context**

Since the last monitoring inspection, there have been a number of staff changes. One teacher left at Christmas and another in February. Teaching in the Reception class has been shared by two temporary teachers since January. A permanent teacher for this class will join after Easter. The school has found it difficult to recruit a permanent teacher for the Year 1 class. Temporary arrangements are in place until the end of the summer term. The acting head of school has been appointed as the substantive headteacher from April. There is one vacancy on the governing body. Plans for the school to convert to an academy have not progressed further.

### **Achievement of pupils at the school**

Although pupils are beginning to make better progress in Years 2, 5 and 6, this is not the case in other year groups. Pupils are not making up previous lost ground quickly enough to raise standards in reading, writing and mathematics. Pupils' writing skills across the school are not as good as they should be. Although they have ideas to write about and can use some interesting vocabulary to express these ideas, their technical writing skills are weak. Too many errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar persist and the presentation of some work is still poor.

Leaders have refined the way they record and analyse information about standards in reading, writing and mathematics across the school and the progress that pupils make in different classes. As a result, they know precisely where there have been improvements and where issues remain. They have identified that the information about standards and progress in the Reception and Year 1 classes is still not reliable.

Pupils who are eligible for pupil premium funding make variable progress. Through careful checks, leaders have identified that their reading skills are weaker than other pupils in the school. These pupils now share books with an adult each day to

encourage them to read and promote their enjoyment of books. However, it is not clear at this stage whether these steps have helped to raise their reading standards.

Children's reading and writing skills are not developed effectively in Reception. Their physical and social skills are stronger. Children concentrate and persevere when they are interested in activities. They are eager to talk and listen to each other. They demonstrate an ability to do things for themselves and an awareness of others, such as when getting changed and doing physical education in the hall. However, improving the learning and progress of children in Reception and pupils in Year 1 has been hindered by staff changes and inconsistent teaching. The quality of teaching and learning in Reception and Year 1 is rightly a concern for senior leaders and governors.

Early reading skills are taught systematically. However, there are gaps in some pupils' knowledge about how to blend sounds and use what they know to spell words correctly. In mathematics, older pupils use their reasoning to solve problems and confidently explain their methods using the correct mathematical language. However, expectations are too low for them to achieve as well as they should, particularly the more able.

### **The quality of teaching**

Despite intensive support for teachers, securing the consistently good teaching that is needed to raise standards and ensure that all pupils learn well has been stubbornly difficult to achieve. Weaknesses in teaching remain a barrier to the school's improvement.

Pupils understand their class routines and are generally keen to learn. However, teachers' expectations about the quality and quantity of pupils' work are not high enough. For example, it was unclear why a teacher told a class, 'You won't finish this today' when they still had more time and were concentrating well on the task in hand. Subsequently, learning was interrupted and slowed. Pupils practising for a test were working successfully but did not know how many they needed to do in the time available so completed too little to achieve well.

Teachers are not always clear what pupils already know and what they need to learn next. Consequently, work is not set at the right level for pupils of different abilities. Some pupils struggle to understand what they are doing and others, particularly the more able, complete activities quickly and sit waiting to be told what to do next. When teachers do not check carefully how well pupils are learning in lessons and spot when they are ready to move on or need help, valuable learning time is lost and pupils' progress slows.

Relationships are positive and teachers generally manage behaviour appropriately, including in the early years, so the school is calm and orderly. However, pupils explained that the variability in teaching means that sometimes they lose focus and chat with each other rather than concentrating and working hard in every lesson.

Teaching assistants skilfully support disabled pupils and those with special educational needs so that these pupils are fully included in lessons. They ask relevant questions and offer clear explanations which help to deepen pupils' understanding and keep them on the right track. Teaching assistants' efforts to help pupils learn well are sometimes hindered when the work they are given to do by the class teacher is not suitably matched to the pupils' level of understanding.

Children in Reception are well cared for and have more opportunities to choose activities for themselves. Children have fun doing what they choose but the activities are not always purposeful. What children will learn and the skills they will develop by doing particular tasks are not always clear. Activities do not provide sufficient opportunities for children to develop their weaker skills, such as writing. The choices that children make are not managed carefully enough to make sure they fully experience different areas of learning.

The quality of marking is getting better but is not used precisely enough to improve specific weaknesses in pupils' work, such as the correct use of full stops and capital letters to demarcate sentences.

### **The quality of leadership in and management of the school**

The appointment of the head of school as the permanent headteacher is a major step forward in stabilising the school's leadership following an extensive period of turbulence which has hindered the pace of improvement. Current leaders have strengthened communications with parents and gained the confidence of staff, parents and the local community.

The head of school and executive headteacher know the school well. They carefully monitor the standards and progress of different groups of pupil, including those who are eligible for pupil premium funding. They know how the funding is spent and where it is making a difference. They are also aware that much still needs to be done to make teaching and learning as good as they should be. Leaders have given teachers a mentor and carefully tailored support to help them improve their classroom practice. Although teachers are keen to do better, improvements have been too slow and the quality of teaching is still inconsistent in different classes and subjects. Staff vacancies and difficulties recruiting high-quality, permanent teachers are limiting the impact of the support and training provided.

Although the executive headteacher and the head of school are clear about the school's strengths and weaknesses, they are not being effectively supported in their

drive for improvement by subject and middle leaders. Staff with key leadership responsibilities do not have sufficiently well-developed skills or expertise to make a difference and help raise standards quickly. Although they are eager to contribute, they are reliant on external support to guide their leadership and improve their classroom practice so that it can be an example to others. Their analysis of how they can help drive improvements is not rooted in a perceptive understanding of teaching and learning across the whole school.

Governance has been strengthened by the addition of a national leader of governance and through extensive, relevant training. The work of the governing body is better organised and sharply focused on the important priorities of raising standards and improving teaching and learning. Governors have supported the recruitment of a permanent headteacher but they know there are weaknesses in other levels of leadership that are slowing the school's progress. They ask challenging questions of leaders and have requested more timely information so that they are able to probe further and demand a more rapid response to the issues they raise.

### **External support**

Since the last monitoring inspection, the local authority and diocese have been galvanised and worked together to secure the school's leadership and strengthen governance. Together, they have provided intensive, cohesive support for teachers to help them improve. The impact of this support, and that from other local schools, has been too variable. Weaknesses in middle leadership need to be tackled to build the school's capacity to improve teaching and learning.

Uncertainty remains about the school's conversion to an academy but governors, school leaders, the local authority and the diocese have sensibly focused on the job in hand of improving the school and not allowed the uncertainty to distract them from what needs to be done.